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## ABOUT PREACHING.

IN his *Jüdische Homiletik*,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Maybaum has published a course of lectures which he delivered during the years 1888 and 1889 at the *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* in Berlin. An Appendix contains an extensive list—it does not pretend to be a bibliography—of printed sermons delivered by well-known preachers, chiefly in Germany and Austria-Hungary. The text and the subject are given in each case, and sometimes a sentence is quoted from the discourse which indicates its scope in a few words. This Appendix serves indirectly to show how rich German-speaking Jews are in homiletical literature. Its chief purpose, however, is to afford practical aid to preachers who are at a loss for a text or a subject, or both. Its usefulness is enhanced by its arrangement. The discourses are carefully classified, typical headings being “Bereshith,” “Pesach,” “Wedding Addresses,” “Patriotic Addresses,” and “Addresses on Various Occasions.” In preparing the list Dr. Maybaum has had regard only for the intrinsic excellence of the sermons, not for the theological opinions of the preachers. In his choice of authors he shows himself sufficiently eclectic. The list includes names as diverse as Plessner and Salomon, Mannheimer and Geiger, Sachs and Ritter, N. M. Adler and Holdheim.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Jüdische Homiletik, nebst einer Auswahl von Texten und Themen*, von Dr. S. Maybaum, Rabbiner der jüdischen Gemeinde und Docent an der *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* zu Berlin.—Berlin, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> There are two sermons by the late Chief Rabbi in the list, one, the inaugural sermon delivered on his assumption of the Chief Rabbinate of Oldenburg, on the 6th of June, 1829: *Die Pflichten die der Seelsorger gegen seine Gemeinde, die Gemeinde gegen ihn zu erfüllen hat*; the other, the sermon preached in the Great Synagogue, on the 8th July, 1845, on

In publishing the present work Dr. Maybaum justly claims to have supplied a want. Preachers like Mannheimer, Stein and Philipppson have more or less formally discussed the subject of homiletics in the introductions to their volumes of sermons. Philipppson, indeed, devoted to it some special articles in his *Allgemeine Zeitung*. It has also been dealt with by Jellinek in the *Ben Chananja*. But a systematic and comprehensive treatise on Jewish homiletics had still to be written, and Dr. Maybaum has written it. His qualifications for the task are unquestionable. He is one of the most effective preachers in Germany, and he owes his success in the pulpit to the careful study of the preacher's art, with which he has reinforced his learning and his oratorical gifts. Practical experience, he tells us, he has enjoyed in abundance; but he has also diligently sought for the best examples of pulpit eloquence, and made them his model. Another characteristic is his unmistakable earnestness—nay, enthusiasm. He takes his pulpit ministrations seriously. They are no vain thing for him; they are his life. There are men who make the pulpit a *dernier ressort*, who welcome it as an alternative to coals, that favourite haven of refuge from the storms of commercial disaster. There is a more numerous class—those who put only one hand to their work instead of both hands, who make sermons as though they were omelets, as rapidly as possible, and with a minimum expenditure of inventive power. They are the preachers who deliver machine-made discourses, devoid of originality, utterly lacking in soul. They have seen, to borrow Mr. Moncure Conway's striking image, no "pattern on the Mount" by which to work. Nor is it inspiration only that they need, but a recognition of the solemnity of their mission and the

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his induction into the office of Chief Rabbi of the United Congregations of the British Empire: *Die Vorsätze und Hoffnungen, mit welchen der Geistliche in sein Amt tritt*. The latter discourse was subsequently translated into English by Barnard Van Oven. (See Dr. Friedländer's article in this Review for July, 1890).

necessity of throwing their whole selves into it. There are few preachers, I suspect, like Mannheimer—"a real man," Professor Graetz calls him—who used during the whole week to think about his Sabbath sermon, and read everything that he thought might help him in its preparation. In point of zeal, Dr. Maybaum deserves to rank with this old master of homiletics. Every line of his book reveals him as a preacher who is impressed with the responsibility of his office, and who has freely dedicated his powers to the discharge of its duties. If they help to imbue other ministers with a like earnestness these lectures will indeed have accomplished a great work.

Dr. Maybaum's fundamental postulate is that the sermon is an essential constituent of the synagogue service. The historical sketch with which he sets out establishes the truth of this proposition. Passing over the discourses of the Prophets, he looks for the origin of the Jewish sermon to the expositions which accompanied the public reading of the Scriptures in the days of Ezra. As time went on these expositions obtained a firmer place in the synagogue; and about the beginning of the Christian era, as Zunz proves, discourses on the portion of the day were delivered on every Sabbath and festival in Palestine, either during the service or independently of it. As the *raison d'être* of these discourses was the ignorance of the sacred tongue that prevailed among the people, they were naturally delivered in Aramaic, the vernacular. A similar practice obtained outside Palestine, so that in Alexandria, for example, the preacher or expounder spoke in Greek; nor did he scruple to adopt even the rhetorical methods of the Hellenic orators. Anxiety to popularise the pulpit, and to ensure its utterances being understood by the vulgar, led to the adoption of a curious device which continued in vogue throughout the Talmudic and Gaonic periods. The sermon was delivered by the head of the Rabbinical school (the Chacham), or by his delegate (the Darshan), not aloud to the audience, but *sotto voce* to the Meturgeman or

Amora, who reproduced it in an attractive form for the benefit of the assembly. This arrangement originated in the increased importance that was attached both in Palestine and Babylonia to "dexterity in using the language of the people, to a pleasant voice, and to appropriate elocution—qualities which were not always possessed by the head of the school, whose chief activities lay in the domain of Halachah." Seeing how exceptional in these days is the union of the literary gift with elocutionary power, one could almost wish that a similar co-operative system were possible, by which the business of writing the sermon should be delegated to one man, and the duty of delivering it assigned to another.

The practice of delivering a discourse on every Sabbath and Festival, which was scrupulously adhered to in the Talmudic and Gaonic ages, fell subsequently into disuse. Homiletic skill came to be far less valued by the Rabbi than knowledge of the ritual law. If the discourses on the Sabbaths before the Great Festivals survived, it was because they exceptionally demanded acquaintance with the Halachah rather than the Agadah. In Spain and in Italy the Jewish pulpit held its ground during the Middle Ages; but in Germany, and, indeed, in every country where persecution was most severe, it virtually perished. Oppression destroyed the very inclination for sermons. In the mediæval reign of terror the Jew had no thought for anything but his own despair. "His ear," says Zunz, "was deaf to the voice of consolation, and hope for him was but a silent look heavenwards." The growth of the *piyut* also helped to drive out the sermon. The poet dispossessed the preacher, and as the service increased in duration with the dimensions of the Prayer-book, the sermon was crowded out owing to sheer want of time. The synagogues of Germany were not without preachers at the close of the seventeenth century; but their discourses were characterised by all the defects of the Polish style of preaching.

*Pilpul* then reigned supreme in the sphere of Talmudic study, and it annexed the homiletical domain likewise. The chief concern of the preacher was not to expound the Scriptural text, still less to exalt the moral and religious *status* of his hearers, but to clear up the difficulties of some recondite passage of the Midrash. Even when the discourse was founded on the Bible, its method was none the less vicious. The preacher, to quote Dr. Maybaum's graphic description, began by citing contradictory passages from the Sacred Volume, and then proceeded to emphasise the difficulties they presented by questions resting chiefly on false interpretations, and betraying ignorance of the simplest grammatical rules. In order to solve the problems thus manufactured the preacher would adduce new passages, which served in their turn as the starting-point for further questions, and thus a huge mass of bewildering ideas was piled up before the astonished gaze of the congregation. It was now the preacher's business to knock over these homiletical ninepins by means of a parable, which reflected his own narrow and distorted views of life. In this way all the original difficulties were satisfactorily disposed of to the great surprise of those few hearers who had not already been hopelessly lost in the twists and turns of the intellectual maze. The preacher's language—if the term is not wholly inapplicable to a nondescript jargon—was worthy of his matter and his method. It was not German, or Polish, or Hebrew, but an amalgam of all three, and of other tongues besides. It is hardly necessary to add that this peculiar style of preaching, which was common in the synagogues of Germany a century ago, is by no means defunct, and that illustrations of it are to be met with to-day in London. The Polish Maggid may be heard on any Sabbath in the Jewish quarter at the East-end—a glaring instance of the survival of the unfittest.

The Hercules who cleansed the Augean stable in Germany was, of course, Moses Mendelssohn. The pure language,

the orderly methods, and the exalted doctrine of the pulpit discourses which are delivered in the German synagogues to-day are largely the result of his efforts. In labouring for the diffusion of culture and enlightenment among his Jewish countrymen, Mendelssohn indirectly helped to regenerate their pulpit. But he contributed to its revival by the most direct means also. He wrote three sermons, one of them, in celebration of the Peace of Hubertsburg, being delivered in the Berlin Synagogue by Rabbi Aaron Moses.<sup>1</sup> In a comparatively short time, however, the preachers were able to deliver German discourses written by themselves. The first of these preachers was Joseph Wolf, of Dessau, Mendelssohn's birthplace. With Wolf in 1808<sup>2</sup> the German-Jewish pulpit may be said to have taken its rise. To the ultra-orthodox party in Germany sermons in the vernacular were an abomination. No one with any pretence to historical knowledge could have objected to a vernacular pulpit on the ground of its being heterodox, seeing that its roots extended down to the very earliest ages of Talmudic Judaism. But a German sermon was a novelty at the beginning of the century, and a novelty in the synagogue stood self-condemned. Vernacular preaching suffered, too, in being identified as the symbol of reform. Its advocates were men of enlightenment and profound religious feeling, for whom sermons in the language of their country constituted only one of the changes needed in order to restore to the service its old empire over the mind and the heart. Their programme bristled with

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<sup>1</sup> This name has some interest for English Jews. The Rev. Dr. Adler, in his Lecture on "The Chief Rabbis of England" (*Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition Papers*, p. 278), suggests the identity of R. Aaron Moses with the Rabbi of the same name who is included in the *הזכרת נשמות* recited in most English synagogues on the chief Festivals. There is no record of his having filled any ecclesiastical office in this country; and the fact of his name appearing in the English Rabbinical roll must, Dr. Adler thinks, be accounted for on other grounds.

<sup>2</sup> Zunz gives 1812 as the date. He adds, that from 1809 to 1813, sermons in the vernacular were delivered every Sabbath in the School of the Consistory at Cassel (*Gottesdienstliche Vortraege*, p. 460).

innovations—revision of the Liturgy, a triennial cycle of readings from the Pentateuch, choral singing, and last, but unfortunately not least, the organ. Vernacular preaching had to pay in unmerited opposition for the bad company in which it found itself. The Government came to the aid of its opponents, and forcibly closed the synagogues in which it had been adopted. But even the arm of the law cannot indefinitely postpone the fulfilment of the higher law of religious progress. The demand for a German-Jewish pulpit was but the outward manifestation of powerful spiritual yearnings that were too imperious to remain long unsatisfied. Before many years had passed, vernacular preaching had not only ceased to be a shibboleth, but had become a bond of union.

And here I may not inappropriately shift the scene and transfer the action to our own country. The introduction of systematic preaching in the vernacular into our community took place but a few years after its initiation in the synagogues of Germany. Wolf, of Dessau, had his English counterpart in Bennaton, who delivered a series of discourses in the Liverpool Synagogue during the years 1824 and 1825.<sup>1</sup> The work he thus began was continued by his

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<sup>1</sup> Marks' Sermons, Second Series, p. 291. See also "Nemo's" letter in the *Jewish Chronicle* for October 7th, 1870. The present writer has a MS. copy of one of Bennaton's Liverpool sermons, made at the time of its delivery, by the late Miss Sarah Hess, of that city. The first Jewish Sermon preached in English was the well-known discourse on "The Faith of Israel," by Rabbi Tobias Goodman. The date is the 2nd of May, 1819, and the place, Liverpool again. Cottonopolis was both the birth-place and the nursery of the Anglo-Jewish Pulpit. Goodman also preached at the Maiden Lane Synagogue on the death of George III. and the Princess Charlotte respectively. It may be desirable to add that the London Jews were not without accomplished preachers, even in the days anterior to the birth of the Anglo-Jewish Pulpit. R. Joshua da Silva, the first Ecclesiastical Chief of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, who died in 1679, was an accomplished pulpit orator. Thirty-one of his discourses in Spanish, published in Amsterdam in 1688, are extant. Among his successors, Jacob Abendana and David Nieto may be mentioned as able preachers. In the sister congregation, R. David Teweel Schiff



brother, the Rev. Moses Nathan; and in 1836 the Rev. David Isaacs, on his removal from Bristol to Liverpool, inaugurated the practice of delivering weekly sermons. Six years later the West London Synagogue, in Burton Street, was consecrated, and regular pulpit instruction commenced in the metropolis by the Rev. D. W. Marks. In its early days, however, the Anglo-Jewish pulpit made but slow progress. Writing in 1832,<sup>1</sup> Zunz<sup>2</sup> thus refers to the position of Judaism in this country:—"Theology is still a century behindhand, and Jewish institutions are accordingly in a state of stagnation; but the elements of a better condition of things are not wanting. The sermons that are occasionally delivered do not appear to be characterised by any particular importance." Zunz's authority for this statement seems to have been David Levi's *Customs of the Jews*—a work which was already fifty years old.<sup>3</sup> The author of the *Vortraege* makes the necessary *amende* in a footnote. He learns that greater attention is now being paid by the preachers to both matter and diction. Nevertheless, in 1832 the Anglo-Jewish pulpit was not in a flourishing condition. It was still wrestling with infantile troubles. History repeated itself, and the vernacular sermon was assailed in England with the same acrimony that it had encountered in Germany. "Some whom I am now addressing," says Professor Marks,<sup>4</sup> "must be old enough to remember the time when the proposal to intro-

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"must," Dr. Adler thinks, "have been a preacher of great power" (*Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition Papers*, p. 286).

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. D. A. de Sola was then delivering occasional Sermons, in English, at the Bevis Marks Synagogue. His "Discourse on the Excellence of the Holy Law," preached on the 26th of March, 1831, was published, and was the first English sermon delivered in that place of worship.

<sup>2</sup> *Gottesdienstliche Vortraege*, p. 471.

<sup>3</sup> Levi's sole reference to the pulpit of his time is as follows: "The Sabbath which happens in those days is called the Sabbath of Repentance, the reason of which is this, the Rabbi of every synagogue on that day preaches a sermon to the Congregation, the subject of which is the Doctrine of Repentance." (*Customs of the Jews*, p. 86.)

<sup>4</sup> Sermons, Second Series, p. 290.

duce English sermons into the Jewish House of Worship was rejected by the congregational rulers as an attempt to foist on the synagogue the spurious offspring of a strange worship. *הקת הגוים* was the cry with which this attempt was met by hundreds of pious and well-meaning, though most unlettered men, who imagined that a vernacular pulpit was the creation of an anti-Jewish and post-biblical age."

Forty years had to elapse before the pulpit showed that it had taken firm root in the English synagogues. As late as 1862 there were only two ministers who preached regularly every Sabbath in London. They were the Rev. A. L. Green, at the Portland Street Synagogue, and the Rev. Professor Marks, at the Margaret Street Synagogue.<sup>1</sup> In that year the latter urged that a determined effort should be made "to place the pulpit of the English Synagogue on a footing of equality with that of our brethren of Continental Germany." This object, he thinks, can never be attained, "until every Anglo-Jewish congregation is addressed from the pulpit by an Englishman."<sup>2</sup> Utterances like these help us to realise the great strides which preaching has made in the community during the last twenty-five years. The vernacular pulpit is no longer an exotic: it is a thoroughly acclimatised institution. As against the two metropolitan preachers who spoke every Sabbath in 1862, there are now some half-a-dozen who preach either weekly or on alternate Sabbaths, besides others who regularly occupy the pulpit at slightly longer intervals. The number of preachers in the provinces has also largely increased.

If we would account for the impetus that has thus been given to English preaching during the last two decades, we must look to the intellectual movement which has taken place in the community during that period. But due credit must be given to Jews' College, which has provided English Jews with the ministers capable of satisfying their new-

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<sup>1</sup> Sermons, Second Series, p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307.

born spiritual needs. The College has contributed to the development of Anglo-Jewish preaching in a two-fold manner. It has filled some pulpits, and by that very act revealed the emptiness of others. To go sermonless from year's end to year's end is no longer a circumstance that a congregation may acquiesce in—an affliction to be suffered gladly. It is felt as a reproach, a stigma; it is a sign of inferior caste. The feeling of self-dissatisfaction thus engendered is a healthy symptom, for it is a guarantee that, sooner or later, the grounds for it will be removed by the initiation of periodical preaching in the synagogue concerned. Jews' College has done much to breed and foster this noble discontent. Every minister it sends forth satisfies the need of one Congregation only to create the needs of many others. At one and the same time it satisfies and stimulates a hunger to hear the Word of God. No work could be nobler. In seeking for the causes of the increased vitality which is now manifested by the Anglo-Jewish pulpit, justice demands that we should give a prominent place among them to the influence of an institution which hitherto has not received its due meed of appreciation at the hands of the community.

Nevertheless, it is doubtful, to say the least, whether our pulpit has hitherto reached the degree of vigour displayed by the Jewish pulpit in Germany. The progress has not been so wide or so deep. Even when we have made the necessary allowance for difference of population, we shall find, I think, that the number of active pulpits in Germany is larger than it is here. To put it in another way, there are proportionately fewer synagogues in that country without preachers than there are in England. I believe, too, that a comparison based on the average quality of the sermons delivered would not be to our advantage. We have but a handful of really effective preachers, and only a very few of our pulpit discourses deserve to survive their birth, to be read and re-read. Our homiletical literature is of scanty proportions, and the materials for increasing it

are accumulating but slowly. It looks as though we should have to wait a long time for an English work corresponding to Kayserling's *Bibliothek Israelitischer Kanzelredner*. It may not unfairly be urged in our defence that our pulpit is of more recent growth than that of our German brethren; that our one training college for ministers has been heavily handicapped by many difficulties, not the least being the microscopic dimensions of the support extended to it by the Community it serves; and lastly, that from various causes, difference of intellectual *status* among them, English Jews at the outset offered a far less congenial soil than their German co-religionists to vernacular preaching. Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that the pious wish breathed by Professor Marks thirty years ago, though it has already come far nearer to fulfilment than even he could have expected, is a pious wish still. We are not yet abreast of Germany in matters relating to the pulpit. On the other hand, anything like an ideal state has not been reached in Germany itself. Dr. Maybaum hopes (in italics) that the time is not far distant when a service without a sermon on a Sabbath or Festival will be "unthinkable." But at present he can only hope. He also deplores the fact that so many German-Jewish pulpits are filled by foreigners.

It will readily be understood that Dr. Maybaum touches only incidentally on the history of the Jewish Pulpit. His main object is eminently practical. His book is chiefly intended for ministers, actual or potential, and his paramount concern is to induct them into the art and mystery of preaching, in both its literary and its elocutionary aspects. It is because his lectures have this aim that they possess the charm of novelty. A guide for Jewish preachers is a new thing indeed, but no one can pretend that it was not needed. Christian ministers of all denominations have their Preacher's Handbooks, their Homiletical Aids and Hints, and what not. Why should not their Jewish colleagues be equally well cared for? Not that these *vade*

*mecums* are all admirable. It is necessary to draw the line somewhere, and I would draw it at "Sermon Outlines," the exact analogue of the religious Catechism. The one encourages the idle preacher, the other the lazy teacher. Both put the brain in splints, and are the grave of originality. But this, by the way. The very fact that a work on the art of Jewish preaching should have been recognised as a want, eloquently testifies to the importance of the place which the sermon now occupies in the synagogue. It is evident that preaching in the vernacular has become a more wide-spread practice, and that the need of making the discourse conform to fixed rules, as regards both treatment and style, has grown more imperious. In fine the Jewish sermon is no longer an anachronism; it is thoroughly modern in form and spirit. It has freed itself from the undisciplined methods of Poland, and is now an orderly, coherent production. Nay, more than this; the preacher aims no longer at puzzling and astonishing his hearers. He has ceased to be an oratorical conjuror, a propounder of homiletical conundrums. His sole object is to teach and uplift.

This is the supreme function of the sermon, and Dr. Maybaum never permits his readers to lose sight of it. He sees, in the growing ignorance of Hebrew, the language of the Prayer-book, a potent argument for the utmost possible increase in the activity of the pulpit. Modern indifference to Sabbath observance still further establishes, in his opinion, the necessity of the sermon, which, if it does not succeed in preserving the sanctity of the entire day of rest, may secure at least a part of it for religious contemplation. The importance and the dignity of the pulpit receives from him the the fullest recognition. "For the congregation the preacher is the ideal Israelite, filled with the knowledge and the fear of the Lord. United to him in sympathy they rise to the contemplation of Divine truth and to the reception of the Revelation which flows unceasingly from the everlasting fount of the Sacred Scrip-

tures." It is an exalted keynote that is thus struck, and it gives the tone to the entire work. The pitch is never lowered. The Jewish preacher who ponders these inspiring lectures will acquire something even more precious than a clearer insight into the art of preaching. He will gain a deeper reverence for his mission. He will learn to be strong and of good courage when oppressed by the disparity between the severity of his work and the seeming meagreness of its results. The memory of these discourses will give him new heart, and impel him to put all his strength, all his soul, into his holy task. The book is a tonic.

But I must not forget that I am writing for the public, not for the preachers only. Thus I cannot follow my author into his many homiletical rules. Even the preacher will have to take some few of his recipes *cum grano*. Here and there they seem to me to have a spice of pedantry, quite à l'Allemande. Thus one of them affirms the necessity of founding the sermon on the *Sedrah* (Pentateuchal lesson) of the week; to treat even of the *Haphtorah* (Lesson from the Prophets) is a privilege only to be allowed to old-standing preachers who have earned it by much discoursing on the Pentateuch. Another rule prohibits irony in the pulpit, in direct opposition to the example of the great Masters of the Agadah. A third forbids the recital of the text previous to the sermon, thus putting the preacher into utterly superfluous leading-strings. A fourth pays far too much honour to the introduction. Now, of all the pitfalls prepared for the unwary feet of the preacher the introduction is the most deadly. The congregants know it to their cost; and that is why I dwell on it here. To give to the introduction what is meant for the sermon, to waste on the preface strength that ought to be reserved for the subject itself, with the result that the discourse grows long and weedy,—this is the neophyte's besetting sin. Knowing the almost incurable tendency of the beginner to unduly protract his

exordium, Dr. Maybaum suggests that it should not exceed a third of the length of the sermon proper, which still seems to me too liberal. In spite of my author's strong dislike for plunging *in medias res* (*mit der Thüre ins Haus fallen*), I would suggest that the student should be advised, as a general rule, to eschew introductions altogether. Perhaps the grudge against them is all the stronger in this country because the general staying-power of the congregation is inferior to what it is in Germany. Dr. Maybaum talks of half-an-hour on Sabbaths and three-quarters of an hour on Festivals, as the proper duration of the sermon. This is certainly more moderate than the Russian Maggid with his discourse that extends over half a day; but it is a larger allowance, nevertheless, than English congregations are accustomed to. In this country the preacher is cautioned never to exceed twenty minutes, and to the warning is appended a recommendation to lean to the side of mercy. This is a good working rule for English ministers, but a working-rule only. There are exceptional circumstances in which it becomes more honoured in the breach than the observance. A really powerful preacher may exceed these limits; it might almost be said that he may consider himself independent of limits. I have heard sermons lasting over an hour by the clock, and have realised Mr. Weller senior's ideal by wishing there had been more of it. On the other hand, I have listened to pulpit harangues of fifteen minutes' duration which have been just a quarter of an hour too long. For the average preacher the twenty minutes rule is a safe one; but it would be absurd to cavil at the man who takes five or ten minutes more, provided he succeeds in holding the attention of his audience to the end. The rule ought not to be forged into fetters. If, however, a preacher avails himself of this licence only to learn from some candid friend that his hearers have been bored, he will not only be wise, but bound, to heed the note of warning. The *raison d'être* of a sermon is not the gratification of the

speaker, but the edification of the congregants ; and as soon as the latter begin to think of the clock, edification is out of the question.

And here I should like to say a word, in the interests of both sides, on the necessity of making sermons, even short ones, interesting ; for brevity is no excuse for dullness, though a never-to-be-forgotten speaker once urged the plea. It is certain that sermons are not as popular as they ought to be ; and the *équivoque* is true in both senses. The discovery that the threatened discourse is not to come off after all, too often sends an almost audible sigh of relief circulating round the synagogue. If the sermon is tiresome, the fault of necessity lies with the preacher, whose prime business it is to interest his hearers by telling them something that stirs their emotions or calls their thinking powers into play. The old Talmudic doctor who once startled his drowsy audience with the wonderful story of the woman who brought forth 600,000 children at a birth, did not scruple to be sensational in order to be effective.<sup>1</sup> Only a R. Jehudah in olden times and a Spurgeon in these days might venture on such expedients. But the lesson is suggested that it is the paramount duty of a preacher not to be dull. It is a duty, too, which congregants would like to see more often carried out. People are beginning to grumble about the platitudes of the pulpit, and the complaint is not altogether groundless. The charge, indeed, betokens intellectual progress, for to detect a real live platitude is a mark of thoughtfulness. Perhaps that is the reason why the task of detection is so congenial. It is a cheap way of proving one's mental superiority. Nevertheless, what is certain is that we live in an age when fresh presentments of truth are urgently demanded. The preacher's supply of ideas must be constantly renewed ; it will not do for him to bring out

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<sup>1</sup> He explained that he was alluding to Jochebed, whose son, Moses, was worth all the sixty myriads of Israel. Midrash Rabbah on Canticles 16a.



his old stock week after week, ringing the changes with something like mathematical regularity. Nor, to be interesting, need he be heterodox. He can stand firmly in the old paths, and yet charm his flock with his novel methods of illustrating and applying ancient truths. Neither ought he to fall into the error of preaching narrow sermons—narrow in the sense of appealing to only one section of his flock. Most congregations are heterogeneous; they comprise the educated and the untutored, the thoughtful and the unthinking. To each class ought the minister to speak in turn. He must have a quick sympathy for the most diverse wants. To do nothing but aim at awakening the slumbering religious sentiments of the indifferent would be unjust to the earnest believer, who needs exhortation and encouragement. But the latter must not monopolise all the solicitude of the pulpit; there are souls to be won as well as to be kept. A preacher can make no greater mistake than to take thought only for those whose faith is as fixed as his own. He must put himself intellectually in the place of the doubter, and feed him with “the food convenient for him.” It is only by such broad preaching—broad in the best sense—that the pulpit can escape that accusation of dulness which is the exact equivalent of failure. Again, if the minister is wise, he will avoid preaching old-fashioned sermons—sermons which, in point of style and treatment, as well as choice of subject, are out of touch with the age. When I was still a novice in the pulpit, an outspoken critic among my congregants—not by any means a man of “reform” views—would sometimes tell me that I did not preach “sermons for the times.” If he had spoken to me in Sanskrit he could not have been more unintelligible. But I have since found out what he meant, and the lesson he tried to teach me is one that a minister cannot learn too quickly. The modern sermon must preach Judaism, but by modern methods. If it is an anachronism, intellectual or artistic, it repels; whereas a pulpit discourse must attract. A

preacher has not discharged himself of his responsibility when he has delivered a sermon which would have satisfied him if he had listened to it, but which, to the majority of his congregants, is sound and fury, signifying nothing. He has to bring religious truth home to the conscience of his hearers, and he must take care to select the means most calculated to effect this supreme object.

Thus, we are face to face with the qualities that go to make the successful preacher. Knowledge of Judaism—its meaning and its history—he must possess, of course, as the very first element in his equipment. But equally essential is knowledge of the world and of men. Dr. Maybaum rightly lays stress upon this point. “Despite the proportions,” he says, “to which the study of Jewish theology has attained in these days, and the application it demands from the student, the unfledged minister must be no mere recluse, if the great sphere of his future activity is not to remain for him an unknown land. The practical theologian who has to influence men’s lives must learn first to know life.” This is profoundly true. Unless the sermon is to be more or less sterile, it must spring from an intimate acquaintance with human nature, its weaknesses and its strength, its needs and its hopes. A preacher who is a man of the world, but devoid of culture, will probably be a pulpit-thumper. If, on the contrary, he is a bookworm, he will deliver not a sermon but an essay. He will preach in the air. I am not quite sure that pulpit-thumping is not to be preferred to essay reading. It does stand a chance of rousing the heart’s echoes. At any rate, a man who knows little about Judaism and less about men, can never make a good preacher. The ideal combination of the ancients—that of תלמוד תורה, with דרך ארץ, is as desirable as ever. It must become more general if the quality of the modern sermon is to undergo the requisite improvement.

Some arrangement is urgently needed which will bring our Jews’ College students into closer contact with the world, without interfering with their studies. Their life-

work will consist in preaching to other hearts and minds. How are they to accomplish this task if those hearts and minds are a sealed book? How can the spiritual physician heal the soul of whose physiology he is utterly ignorant? It may be said that the necessary knowledge will come with experience; but while the minister's experience grows the congregation starves—spiritually. The youthful preacher has to gain his worldly wisdom at the expense of his hearers, who are compelled to listen to admonitions how to live which lack the actuality that a ripe knowledge of life alone can give them. That a congregation must be more or less a *corpus vile* is inevitable; for the minister is always learning, even though he be a veteran. But steps ought to be taken to reduce the subject's sufferings to a *minimum*. Before a man is trusted with the cure of souls he ought to have added some knowledge of the world to his academic acquirements. But of this more anon.

Even ministers who have emerged from the probationary state may well apply themselves more diligently to the study of contemporary life. Jellinek who, I suppose, is the most eminent of living Jewish preachers, has long been accustomed—so Dr. Maybaum hears—to set down in his note-book the various suggestive circumstances that occur in his daily experience, with the view of utilising them in his sermons. As a rule, ministers are content, if they have a common-place book, to fill it with passages they meet with in their reading. And yet a study of the living world will furnish the preacher with by far the most valuable materials he can possibly obtain. He has to play on that most difficult of all instruments, the human heart. Observation of men and affairs will help him to understand its character and its compass, to master the secret of its melody, to awake its diverse tones at his will. But it is possible to mix with the world, and yet to be none the wiser.

There are not a few who, though they diligently

ponder human nature, have yet to confess that they do not understand it. Therefore the preacher needs not only opportunities for studying human life and character, but the very power to observe, and the ability, moreover, rightly to interpret, moral phenomena. He needs eyes to see and ears to hear—in a word, insight. But this is a faculty which no acquaintance with homiletical rules can give—one which experience may develop, but cannot create *ex nihilo*. It is a veritable gift of God. Thus the true preacher is born, not made. A minister may be a walking encyclopædia, an elegant writer, a fluent speaker. He may be all three combined. But unless he is a man as well, endowed with a fine sympathy, not merely for the sufferings, but for the needs, the feelings, the ideas of his kind, gifted with a second sight that pierces the mystery of other hearts and other lives, he will not be a preacher. If this *clairvoyance* were more general, effective sermons would not be so few and far between. As for the solecisms that set the hearers' teeth on edge the preacher's innate discernment would make them impossible. Bad taste and want of tact in the pulpit, as elsewhere, are the symptoms of an unsympathetic nature. To say the right thing at the right time is one of the preacher's most elementary obligations. But it is an obligation which is too often disregarded, because the insight that is needed to distinguish the seasonable thing from the unseasonable is not always present. The want of this sixth sense is often attended by *bizarre* results. Dr. Maybaum cites the instance of the Rabbi who, at a wedding, improved the occasion by gravely reminding the bride of her duty to wear a wig. But we can all furnish examples from our own experience.

It is clear that the preacher's office is one that demands a remarkable combination of qualities. It requires an almost poetic insight, the power of literary and oratorical expression, and deep enthusiasm—all, of course, in addition to theological scholarship. Enthusiasm it requires,

indeed, in common with every other vocation, but in a greater degree. For it is the essential condition of a preacher's success that he should be able to inspire others, and this is manifestly impossible unless he is himself inspired. The minister, then, must possess the various gifts and attainments of the scholar, the poet, the man of the world, the man of letters, and the public speaker. Crown all this by saying that he must needs be a thoroughly good man—which is absolutely essential for eminence in no other vocation—and the exacting character of his office stands out in bold relief. No wonder that there are so few good preachers, Jewish or otherwise. But is it not true that the system prevailing in our community seems to have been expressly contrived to prevent us from obtaining our proper share of the number? We appear to have made up our minds that the ideal preacher, so rich and rare are the ingredients needed to produce him, is a wholly impossible being, and that therefore we must needs be content with mediocrity in the pulpit, and be thankful it is not something worse. Are we doing our best to attract the most talented men into the profession? Or are we not rather doing our best, or worst, not only to keep them out of it, but to drive those out who are already in? The Anglo-Jewish pulpit has made great strides during the past five-and-twenty years, but the progress has been achieved in the teeth of the most unfavourable conditions. To put the matter bluntly, the preacher is shamefully underpaid. He is expected to be a man of ability and high character; he is weighted with the heaviest responsibilities; yet in point of emolument his place is somewhere between a carpenter and a confidential clerk. The Anglo-Jewish ministry has two or three prizes, which, of course, only two or three men can enjoy at the same time; but even these plums of the profession are not for a moment to be compared in value with the average income of a fairly successful solicitor, or engineer, or medical practitioner. When they are contrasted with the earnings of distin-

guished members of the learned professions, the disparity becomes more glaring still. The consequences are only too patent. Young men of ability, who have some pecuniary resources, decline to study for a vocation whose worldly advantages are in inverse proportion to its responsibilities. Those who do study for it are chiefly youths of slender means, whose very poverty is an *à priori* disability, inasmuch as it is seldom found in combination with the good breeding which is so desirable in a minister. The scarcity of the raw material tends, moreover, to keep down the intellectual standard. Men of no particular aptitude for the ministry pass muster owing to the lack of more promising recruits. But this is not all the evil. The dearth of candidates throws open the profession to men who have not even training to recommend them. Besides being devoid of natural aptitude for the vocation, they lack theological knowledge. They have taken to preaching because they have failed at everything else. Into such hands does the office sometimes fall, which should be administered by the very elect of the earth !

Nor does the difficulty lie only in getting good men, but in retaining them. If the ministry is a *pis aller* with some, it is merely a *pied à terre* with others. Owing to the inadequacy of his remuneration, the minister is often tempted to abandon his profession for a more lucrative calling ; and as the temptation naturally presents itself only to the most capable, the pulpit is always in danger of losing the men it can spare least. Hardly has a minister gained the experience that alone can fertilise his learning and his endowments, before, at the bidding of self-interest, he may be impelled to throw all the work of years to the winds, and strike out for himself a totally different career. Nor ought he to be very severely blamed. That enthusiasm for his sacred mission ought to save him from such disloyalty is a beautiful theory. But when poverty comes in at the door enthusiasm is apt to fly out at the window, and it is hard for a man to go on living for an idea, and almost living on

it, too, when his children's needs are tugging at his heart-strings. The pastor has too often a redoubtable antagonist in the father. *Le père de famille est capable de tout*—even of exchanging a pittance for a competence. No, we must see that we saddle the right shoulders with the blame. It must be put, not on the renegade, but on the community, which looks on and tacitly acquiesces in his defection. No one seems to realise the harm it inflicts on the pulpit and on the spiritual interests that the pulpit has to promote. "The Rev. Mr. So-and-so, one of our most able and zealous pastors, has been appointed to the post of Controller of the Sealing-wax Department at H.M. Stationery Office. We congratulate both the rev. gentleman and the community." So runs the journalistic formula. Not a word about the serious injury that has been done to our corporate religious life by the unnatural translation; not a word of condolence with the bereaved pulpit.

The remedy is obvious, of course; but something else is needed besides increasing stipends. The ministry must no longer be the appanage of a class. It must offer a career to talents, whatever their social environment. "The Torah," it was declared long ago, "goeth forth from the poor"; but even in the days that gave birth to the saying, the lips of the affluent were also wont to teach the Divine doctrine. The Rabbis and preachers of the Talmud were drawn from every social grade, not excluding the highest. We may be sure that the discourses of R. Jehudah the Prince were no less, but all the more, effective because of the grandeur of his worldly position.<sup>1</sup> To-day especially must the old system be revived. Let our gilded youth be

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<sup>1</sup> Highly significant is the beautiful passage in *Ketuboth* 104a: When "Rabbi" was at the point of death, he lifted his hands towards Heaven and prayed: "Sovereign of the Universe, Thou knowest that I have laboured with both hands for the Torah, yet the breadth of my little finger is greater than the worldly pleasure I have enjoyed through life. May peace be with me where I go." Thereupon a Voice was heard proclaiming "Let him enter into peace."

taught to regard the preacher's office as one even more worthy of their abilities and their enthusiasm than the Bar, or Medicine, or the Stock Exchange, and the pulpit will gain an influence which cannot fail to leave a deep impress for good on the religious life of the community. The Church provides an honoured calling for members of the best Christian families. Why should not the same state of things prevail among us? Why should the Jew consider it beneath his dignity to be a minister of God?

But the pulpit needs the best minds we have, and they are not to be found exclusively among the wealthy. There are many able men who might be secured for it if it only promised freedom from anxiety as to mere ways and means. That a minister should know nothing of the *res angusta domi* is but just, seeing how heavy are the cares that are inseparable from his office. The pulpit, then, must be far more liberally endowed than it is at present. The community must face the necessity of largely increasing the emoluments of its preachers. Those congregations that can bear the burden must tax themselves for this purpose. Those that are not able to bear it must get others to tax themselves in their stead. The Provincial Ministers' Fund has done good work already; but its usefulness might be very greatly extended if its resources were larger. Certainly the principle on which the Fund is based ought to receive much wider application. There can be no question whatever that it is just the little country congregations, consisting, perhaps, of a handful of Polish tailors or glaziers, that most require pastors of ability to guide them. As matters are arranged at present, either the least competent ministers are thought good enough for them, or, worse still, they are left practically without spiritual direction, unless we are to dignify the ministrations of the *Shochet* with that title. No one is responsible for this state of things but the community. Those who pay the piper have the right to call the tune; but those who pay him badly have only to thank their own



niggardly and short-sighted policy if the music is ugly. It may seem a regrettable anomaly that even the work of religion cannot prosper without the aid of hard cash ; but no amount of lamentation will get rid of the fact. Those who think that there ought to be sufficient earnestness and zeal among English Jews to make preaching a work of love, have a fine opportunity of bringing about that ideal state by initiating it themselves. "Let the assassins commence," was the retort with which the proposal to abolish capital punishment was once met. Similarly, those who hold that ministers should be free from sordid motives, can inaugurate the ideal clerical order by enrolling either themselves or their sons. But, pending the conclusion of this eminently fair arrangement, it would be well, so as not to lose time, to make sure of getting able men for our pulpits by the reliable, if paradoxical, expedient of offering them adequate pay.

Yet another criticism, and I have done. Our ministers, as a rule, take upon themselves the full burden of their responsibilities too early. It is at once ludicrous and pathetic to find Dr. Maybaum laying down the rule that before the pastor enters upon the discharge of his duties he ought to have passed the crisis in his religious development. In other words, he ought to have arrived at something like fixity of conviction as regards the main principles of his creed. So he ought. But how is he to do it under a system which sends men direct from the class-room to the pulpit, and which sets them to minister to others before they understand themselves ? What sort of influence can the pulpit wield, what degree of respect can it command, when it becomes the throne of inexperience ? What but disaster can happen when an army is led by cadets ? Our system urgently needs alteration. Only experienced pastors should be appointed to incumbencies, however small the congregations concerned. The inexperienced men must be content to serve as curates. It will be time enough to promote them when they have won their spurs, when

they have gained some practical acquaintance with life, some insight into their own religious condition. Seeing that the young minister has so much to learn, how can the task of teaching men and women be safely entrusted to his unaided efforts? His congregation nominally submit themselves to his guidance, though some of them with their wide knowledge of the world, and their mature religious views, are well fitted to be his instructors. Is it not clear that his inexperience is sufficient to discount the value of his homilies? that his exhortations must offer to those that hear them food for criticism rather than the bread of life? Those who tolerate such a system forget that the pulpit owes most of its influence to the personality of the preacher, and that if its potency, as a religious force, is to increase, the congregation must feel more often that they are listening, not merely to a speaker, but to a man.

It may be said that I have throughout invested the pulpit with an exaggerated importance, and that preaching is by no means the whole duty of a minister. But it is unquestionably the chief part of it. The sermon is the sole point of spiritual contact between the preacher and the majority of his congregation. Outside the synagogue they part company, and the minister's opportunities for exercising a religious influence over his flock are practically restricted to those rare occasions when the stream of some individual life has reached a turning-point. The Jewish householder tolerates no "director," nor are our elderly spinsters in the habit of inviting their pastor home with a view to enjoying tea and edification simultaneously. Whether it would be better for our religious interests if we were able to borrow such customs from our neighbours is a problem I have never been able to solve. Nor do I forget or underrate the minister's "parish" work—his labours among the poor, his instruction of the young, his visitation of the sick. But are not the qualities needed for such ministrations the very essentials of success in the pulpit? We need only to look

around us in order to see that our most zealous ministers are our most capable preachers. It must necessarily be so. The most effective pulpit orator is he who throws his whole heart into his work—he whose discourses derive their chief power from his character and his life. The pulpit has its charlatans, no doubt, like every other profession; but they are soon found out. The Rev. Charles Honeyman flourishes but for a day. To be a truly successful preacher, trusted and honoured—a preacher whose words find hearts already open to receive and to cherish them—a man must be conspicuous for enthusiasm and goodness. But possessed of these endowments he cannot fail to shine in every department of his pastoral work. Increased efficiency in the pulpit, and a high standard of ministerial effort, are but synonyms. To aim at the one is to pave the way for the other.

But in truth it is hardly possible to lay undue emphasis on the necessity of a vigorous pulpit in an age whose characteristic note is materialism in both senses of the word. Preaching, powerful and convincing, that appeals both to the heart and the intellect, is the one sure means of vitalising the religious sentiment, the most effective ally of the soul that is struggling to hold its own. In the pulpit the living voice and the personal example of the preacher combine with the solemn associations of the House of Prayer to enforce the message of the inspired Word, to intensify the call of conscience. Faith and duty teach their lessons under the most impressive conditions.

“God is not dumb, that He should speak no more;  
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness,  
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor.”

But for many a wanderer the pulpit may haply be the Guide and the Lawgiver. Again, the hesitating feet are led to the Mount of God; the Divine reveals itself anew, and the responsive cry of obedience rings out as in the days of yore.

MORRIS JOSEPH.